

# Office of Legislative Affairs Functional Leadership Plan

04/27/00

## I. Introduction

This document sets forth the NASA Office of Legislative Affairs Functional Leadership Plan within the framework, management principles and structure identified in the NASA Strategic Plan and the NASA Strategic Management Handbook. The Office of Legislative Affairs (OLA) serves as the focal point for interactions between the Congress of the United States and NASA. (Note of exception: Due to the special relationship between the Congress and the NASA Office of the Inspector General (OIG), the OIG is not required to clear communications with Congress through the OLA).

## II. Mission

It is the mission of the Office of Legislative Affairs to provide executive leadership, direction and coordination of all communications and relationships, both legislative and nonlegislative, between NASA and the U.S. Congress. OLA has major responsibilities

- for assisting the Office of the Administrator and the Agency in general in the presentation and defense of the President's budget for NASA before the Congress
- to interpret Congressional actions and views with respect to NASA to both the Agency and the Administration in general and to interpret NASA's actions and views to the Congress
- to secure the optimum Congressional action upon the President's proposed budget and other proposed legislation as it affects NASA

## III. Functions

In order to fulfill its mission, the OLA is responsible for performing the following functions:

- ensure that the President's space policy, program and budget are advocated and defended before Congress
- serve as principal advisor and consultant to the NASA Administrator and other NASA officials on all matters involving relations with the U.S. Congress

- coordinate NASA participation at Congressional hearings, staff briefings, Member meetings and any other meetings affecting NASA. This includes arranging for representation by NASA, ascertaining the key issues that are likely to be discussed, briefing officials representing NASA on the issues and legislative aspects of their appearance, reviewing statements and other materials to be presented to assure that they reflect the Administration's and NASA's management policies and objectives, and responding to all actions including the provision of further material requested and answers to questions that arise as a result of these interactions
- receive, acknowledge and reply to all Congressional written and verbal inquiries, coordinating such replies within NASA and with other agencies and maintaining files of such correspondence
- assure compliance by NASA with Congressional statutory reporting requirements
- analyze and coordinate with the White House and other elements of the Executive Branch NASA's position on legislation proposed by Congress and within the Executive Branch. This includes requests for NASA views on draft testimony and reports of other agencies
- maintain an OLA web site on the NASA web in order to ensure the widest dissemination of information pertaining to Congressional/NASA activities
- educate and inform Members of Congress about NASA's programs and projects and about NASA activities in their respective States/Districts

#### IV. Goals, Objectives, Indicators of Success

Listed below are four primary areas in which the NASA Office of Legislative Affairs provides functional leadership for the Agency. These are:

1. Principal advisor to the NASA Administrator and other NASA officials on all matters relating to NASA's relations with Congress
2. Congressional liaison and outreach
3. Response to Congressional inquiries
4. Coordination of Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requests for comments on legislation and other matters

## **1. Principal advisor to the NASA Administrator and other NASA officials**

The OLA serves as the principal advisor to the NASA Administrator and other NASA officials on all matters relating to NASA's relations with Congress.

### **Goal:**

Ensure that the NASA Administrator and other NASA officials are provided with the most accurate and timely information and guidance regarding Congressional activities.

### **Objectives:**

- Ensure that the Administrator and other NASA Officials are fully prepared for all interactions they may have with Members of Congress including but not limited to Congressional testimony, visits with Members, proposed legislation, items of interest/concern to Members.
- Ensure that the Administrator and other NASA officials are not placed in situations with Members of Congress or their staff that would cause any embarrassment or negative repercussions for NASA or the individual involved.
- Provide advice and guidance that allows the Administrator and other NASA officials to proactively identify issues that may be of concern to Members of Congress and Congressional staff and to handle these issues in ways that reflect positively on NASA and on NASA officials. Should unforeseen issues arise, fully research such issues and provide the most appropriate advice for their resolution.

### **Indicators of Success:**

- Legislation impacting NASA broadly reflects the priorities and goals of NASA and the Administration

## **2. Congressional liaison and outreach**

Congressional liaison and outreach functions which include: management of the Agency defense of annual authorization/appropriation bills, testimony, program/budget briefings and other requests from Congress; management of NASA role in Congressional votes on NASA issues; management of production, clearance and submission of NASA statutory and committee requested reports; in conjunction with the Office of the Comptroller, management of the preparation of the NASA annual operating plan and revisions thereto submitted to Congress; educating and providing information about NASA and its programs to Congressional Members and staff; responding to questions and material requested resulting from the appearance of NASA witnesses before Congressional committees.

### **Goal:**

Successful passage of Congressional legislation that is reflective of NASA/Administration positions and responsive to Congressional requests.

### **Objectives:**

- Manage the preparation of Congressional testimony and Congressional briefings that fully comply with NASA/Administration policies and positions.
- Prepare NASA witnesses for Congressional hearings so that they represent NASA/Administration positions; ensure they are cognizant of Congressional concerns and issues.
- Educate Congressional Members/staff to ensure that Congress is aware of NASA/Administration's positions on legislation that comes before it.
- Manage the preparation of responses to statutory and committee requested reporting requirements that are timely and responsive.
- As statutorily mandated, coordinate and provide NASA Congressional committees with the initial and updated Operating Plans that describe NASA's implementation of its annual appropriation.
- Educate Members and staff about NASA programs to ensure they have information needed to understand NASA's mission, goals, and activities.
- Coordinate the response to requests for post-hearing data such as questions and material for the record to ensure that Congressional hearing records can be completed.
- Ensure that Members are aware of NASA activities in their States/Districts.

### Indicators of Success:

- Successful execution of Congressional hearings including timely and complete written testimony and well prepared witnesses who are knowledgeable of and responsive to Congressional issues and concerns.
- Support from Members for NASA/Administration position on legislation pertaining to NASA or in which NASA has a strong interest.
- Timely and complete submission of statutory and committee requested reporting requirements.
- Support of NASA's Operating Plan by Congressional committees.

### **3. Response to Congressional inquiries**

Coordination of and response to written Congressional correspondence and to phone requests from Congressional offices. NASA receives thousands of Congressional letters and phone calls annually, each of which requires a response and most of which require coordination with other NASA Program Offices/Centers for preparation of the response. The correspondence function also includes the filing and retrieval of Congressional correspondence.

#### Goal:

Provide responses to written and telephone inquiries from Congressional offices that are timely, reflect NASA policy, address the issues raised, and are well coordinated and written.

#### Objectives:

- Carefully research, coordinate and prepare responses to Congressional inquiries, consulting with such Program Offices/Centers as needed to ensure the information provided is well written, accurate and reflects NASA policy.
- Provide answers to Congressional inquiries in the shortest amount of time possible, ensuring that the answers have been appropriately staffed, prepared, and cleared for signature of the NASA Associate Administrator for Legislative Affairs or the NASA Administrator.
- Ensure that all written correspondence is appropriately logged in and filed and is electronically accessible for all OLA employees to search and retrieve.

#### Indicators of Success:

- Positive response from Congressional Inquires Division Satisfaction Survey mailed to Congressional staffers from whom OLA has received Congressional correspondence; this survey is performed every two years (end of each Congress).
- Responding to written correspondence within three weeks of date of the OLA's receipt as often as possible.

#### **4. Coordination of OMB requests for comments on legislation and other matters**

The Office of Legislative Affairs is responsible for the management of NASA's response to requests from OMB for Agency clearance on legislation and other matters. This requirement stems from direction provided in OMB Circular A-19.

#### Goal:

To adhere to the requirements of OMB Circular A-19 and to provide OMB with timely and coordinated NASA views on proposed legislation and other requested legislative matters such as draft testimony and draft reports.

#### Objectives:

- Identify and coordinate NASA position on proposed legislation or other legislative matters with all NASA organizations that might have an interest in the proposed legislation.
- Respond to OMB within the time frame requested for response.

#### Indicators of Success:

- NASA's position is reflected in OMB's position on legislation and legislative matters.